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# Airborne Inspectors "Barge-In" To Keep The Grain Moving

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When a shipper requests inspectors in the Illinois Department of Agriculture to inspect a shipment of grain, the inspectors keep track of the progress of the barge in which the grain is traveling down the Mississippi River. As the tow nears East St. Louis, the grain inspectors contact the tugboat captain by radio, then board their helicopter (ABOVE: 0171C43-14). Tugboats push tows of up to 30 barges on the Mississippi. Sometimes the river is icy and passage is difficult (BELOW: 0171C47-8), making the helicopter particularly useful for inspection trips. In minutes after taking off, the airborne inspectors are ready to land right on the barges (RIGHT: 0171C43-19). After landing, the grain inspectors open the barges holding the grain they are to inspect (FAR RIGHT: 0171C46-2). Each barge holds 75,000 bushels of grain.



YOU MAY NOT KNOW IT, but much of the wheat that goes into your bread, cakes, and flour is inspected for quality before it is processed.

Wheat shipped in barges down the Mississippi River sometimes gets unique inspection treatment--grain inspectors at East St. Louis, Ill., use a helicopter to reach the moving barges.

Millions of bushels of grain are shipped by barge from grain elevators on the Illinois, Missouri, and Mississippi Rivers to the Gulf of Mexico for firms which export or process grain. Much of the grain is officially inspected in accordance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture standards of quality.

ON THE COVER: A helicopter carrying grain inspectors from the Illinois Department of Agriculture prepares to land on a grain-laden barge tow on the Mississippi River near East St. Louis, Ill. (0171C43-23)





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At East St. Louis, grain inspectors in the Illinois Department of Agriculture inspect about 12½ million bushels of bargelot grain each year--mostly corn, soybeans, and wheat.

These Federal-State inspectors, employed by the State of Illinois and licensed by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, provide official grain inspection on request. Such inspection is available in almost every other State, also.

But only in Illinois--at least for the present--are grain inspection samples obtained by helicopter. Once the inspectors get their samples from the barge, they take them back to their laboratory to determine the USDA grade.

For three years, the Illinois inspectors used a motor boat to reach grain barges midstream. When the boat--named CERES after the goddess of agriculture--was struck by a barge tow in September 1970, the Illinois Department of Agriculture leased a helicopter to replace

the boat temporarily. However, the inspectors may continue to use the helicopter instead of the boat as a part of their regular service.

The helicopter (and previously, the boat) has not only made the inspectors' job easier, it has helped the shippers too, by permitting grain shipments to move to their destinations without the delay and expense involved in separating a barge from a tow for inspection.

When a barge was separated from a tow, it cost the shipper a minimum of \$100 (which he paid the towing company), and the shipper had to wait 3 to 15 days for another tow which had room for the barge. This was expensive both in time and money.

Through their ingenuity, the Illinois inspectors provide a rapid service. This service is important not only to the shippers but to the consumer, in helping to assure a good quality raw material for grain products.







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Using 12-foot probes (TOP: 0171C50-1), the Federal-State inspectors take 25 to 30 samples of grain from each barge by pushing the probe deep into the grain (ABOVE LEFT: 0171C50-34). The grain from each probe is first transferred to troughs (ABOVE RIGHT: 0171C49-17) and then to bags (RIGHT: 0171C50-17) which the inspectors carry back to their East St. Louis laboratory. In the lab, the 25 to 30 bags of grain from each barge are mixed together and a 2½ pound sample is taken. This assures that the official sample—which is then inspected and graded—is truly representative of the lot from which it was taken. After the grade is determined, the inspectors mail the certificates to the shipper, and, if requested, will report the grading information by telephone.

Magazines and newspapers may obtain 8x10 prints of these photographs free from the Photography Division, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Specify title and number of this publication.

With their helicopter parked on an adjacent barge on the tow, the inspectors sample grain from an open barge traveling down the Mississippi River. Within minutes they will be airborne with their samples, en route to the laboratory (0171C46-17).

